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IX.—GASTON PARIS: ROMANCE PHILOLOGIST AND MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

For a number of years a *mot* passed quietly about in the learned world of Paris—fortunately without ever committing the indiscretion of finding its way into print—to the effect that Gaston Paris ought to be elected to the French Academy in order that there might be in that august body at least one member who was an authority on the French language. Another and more piquant form of this much appreciated pleasantry, was that the one man who, as a matter of course, could not expect to be elected to the Academy, happened to be the greatest living authority on the subject of its labors.

Little by little, however, a career of profound scholarship, enhanced by the distinction of a rare literary charm and of a personality most engaging, came to be more and more recognized in the influential circles of the French capital, and for the last three or four years it had been an open secret, among those directly interested, that the “apotheosis” of Gaston Paris was only a matter of a little time. Yet when the verdict of immortality arrived, it was not a little diverting to note the embarrassment of the daily press in endeavoring to set forth the claims of the slightly known scholar to so coveted a distinction. To describe him as one of the editors of the *Romania* (a review, of the name or of the existence of which most good people had never heard), and as the author of an *Étude sur le rôle de l'accent latin* and of a *Manuel de l'ancien français*, which was about the extent of the enlightenment accorded to the general public, was manifestly inadequate. Jules Lemaitre, it is true, in the third series of his *Contemporains*, and Gaston Deschamps, in *La Vie littéraire à Paris*, of the *Temps*, had discoursed brilliantly on the more salient features of their friend's literary reputation, but for the most part the new academician still remains a comparative stranger to the *grand*

public. This fact, however, in view of the abstruse nature of most of his productions, need not be accounted a discredit to the intelligent public, while the election of such a candidate by the Academy reflects distinguished honor on a body supposed to be little devoted to the interests of minute and exacting scholarship.

If there was ever a notable instance of the influence of inheritance and environment on human development, such an instance is to be seen in the early predilections and later attainments of Gaston Paris. He is the son of his own predecessor at the Collège de France, Paulin Paris, an eminent savant, an outline of whose career deserves to be briefly recorded here. Paulin Paris, the father, was born at Avenay (Marne), in the year 1800. In 1828 we find him installed in the Department of Manuscripts at the National Library in Paris. In 1837 he was elected a member of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres*, and in 1853 became the first incumbent of the newly created chair of the Literature of the Middle Ages at the Collège de France. From that time forward, until he was succeeded, in 1872, at the Collège de France, by his distinguished son, and even until his death in 1881, he continued to be an indefatigable and prolific student of the Old French language and literature.

In order that we may have before us from the outset the principal *data* of our proposed study, and at the same time may clear from our pathway, by setting them aside in a single paragraph, a mass of details that should not be omitted, let us make a barren list (yet not, indeed, too easily collected) of the external facts of Gaston Paris' early life.

Gaston Bruno Paulin Paris was born at Avenay, August 9, 1839. In 1856 he had finished his studies at the Collège Rollin in Paris, and had become a student at the University of Göttingen. In 1857 he studied at the University of Bonn. From 1858 to 1861 he was a student at the *Ecole des Chartes*, where he received, in the latter year, his diploma as *Archiviste-paléographe*, presenting as his thesis an *Etude sur le rôle de*

l'accent latin dans la langue française, dedicated to Friedrich Diez, and published in 1862. In 1863 he translated into French the Introduction to Diez' *Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen* (the whole of which work was later published in translation, by collaboration). In 1865 he became Docteur-ès-lettres, his French thesis being the voluminous *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne*, and the Latin thesis, *De Pseudo-Turpino* (disseruit Gaston Paris, juris litterarumque licentiatius). In 1865 he was also one of the founders of the *Revue critique*, which became the receptacle of most of his learned productions for the following two or three years. In 1868 he was one of the authors of the *Recueil de rapports sur l'état des lettres et le progrès des sciences en France*. In 1869 he became instructor in the newly-founded *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, where he began his epoch-making investigation of the *Vie de St. Alexis*, the publication of which was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian war, but which appeared in 1872, receiving the Prix Gobert. The year 1872 is also memorable in Romance scholarship for the founding by Gaston Paris and Paul Meyer of the quarterly journal *Romania*, and for the accession of the former to the chair of Mediaeval French Literature till that time officially occupied by his father, but which he himself had filled for several years as substitute. In 1875 he was one of the founders of the *Société des anciens textes français*. In the same year he was named Chevalier (and later Officier) de la Légion d'Honneur, and in 1876 was elected *Membre de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres*.

We shall here do well to desist from an incomplete chronicle of activities that become, from this time on, too multifarious for so arid an enumeration. Suffice it to say that in the *Romania*, the *Revue critique*, the *Histoire littéraire de la France*, the *Mémoires de la Société de linguistique*, the *Journal des Savants* and the *Revue de Paris*, our author has continued down to the present moment to display a prodigious literary and scholarly activity. Closing now, as was suggested, this paragraph of annals, not inglorious though unadorned, let us return to the

boyhood of our hero, and gather for our pleasure and instruction a few of the reminiscences that have been incidentally preserved for us by his own gifted pen. Listen, if you will, to the dedication to his father of the *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne*:

“ Mon cher père,

Tout enfant, je connaissais Roland, Berte aux grands pieds et le bon cheval Bayard, aussi bien que la Barbe-Bleu ou Cendrillon. Vous nous racontiez parfois quelque-une de leurs merveilleuses aventures, et l'impression de grandeur héroïque qu'en recevait notre imagination ne s'est point effacée. Plus tard, c'est dans vos entretiens, dans vos leçons et dans vos livres que ma curiosité pour ces vieux récits, longtemps vaguement entrevus, a trouvé à se satisfaire. Quand j'ai voulu, à mon tour, étudier leur origine, leur caractère et les formes diverses qu'ils ont revêtues, votre bibliothèque, rassemblée avec tant de soin depuis plus de trente années, a mis à ma disposition des matériaux qu'il m'eût été bien difficiles de réunir et souvent, même de soupçonner. Vos encouragements m'ont soutenu dans le cours de mes recherches; vos conseils en ont rendu le résultat moins défectueux. En vous dédiant ce livre, je ne fais donc en quelque façon que vous restituer ce qui vous appartient. Acceptez-le comme un faible témoignage de ma profonde et respectueuse tendresse.”

As an additional echo from early student days and a further testimony to the rare opportunities for development that smiled upon this favored youth, we may record the sympathetic words that fell from his lips at the celebration at Paris, in 1893, of the centenary anniversary of the birth of the founder of Romance philology, Friedrich Diez.

“ J'ai bien volontiers accepté d'être ”—he said on that occasion—“ avec mon ami Paul Meyer, un des deux présidents de ce banquet. Nous sommes en effet sans doute presque les seuls Français actuellement vivants qui aient connu le patriarche de nos études et qui lui aient parlé *di bocca a bocca*. J'ai eu surtout ce privilège, ayant habité pendant neuf mois, dans ma dix-huitième année, la charmante ville [de Bonn] qui était

devenue sa seconde patrie. . . . Il me restera toujours de lui un souvenir précieux et doux, fait de *vénération*, de *sourire* et d'*attendrissement*. La *vénération* est due à ce qu'a produit de vraiment grand cet homme si modeste et qui s'effaçait si volontiers; le *sourire* me revient involontairement aux lèvres quand je le revois avec sa timidité qu'augmentait son extrême myopie, sa casquette verte à longue visière, ses manières embarrassées, la gêne avec laquelle il avouait (et prouvait) qu'il parlait médiocrement ces langues romanes qu'il possédait si bien; mais le sourire fait bientôt place à une *émotion attendrie* quand je repense à son extrême bienveillance pour l'écolier inconnu qui lui était un beau jour arrivé de Paris, à la bonté qui éclairait son visage quand ses yeux incertains m'avaient enfin reconnu dans le demijour de son paisible cabinet, aux promenades qu'il me permettait de faire à ses côtés, répondant (en français, malgré l'effort qu'il lui fallait faire) à mes questions souvent bien peu réfléchies, aux encouragements si chaleureux qu'il donna bientôt à mes premiers essais."

Having thus caught a glimpse of the formative influences affecting the mind and heart of the future scholar, we are in some degree prepared to address ourselves to the welcome task of studying, as the limitations of the present occasion may best permit, his aims, and what the French would so aptly term his *œuvre*. For this purpose it will be convenient to divide the remainder of this paper under four heads, covering briefly the labors of Professor Paris (1) in *Philology proper* (using that word as at present accepted in this country); (2) in *Literary History*; (3) in *Criticism and Belles-lettres*; (4) in *Education*.

I. PHILOLOGY.

Leaving out of the account a brief study of an *Épître farcie pour le jour de Saint-Etienne* in the *Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur* for 1862 (and I cannot refrain from noting that it stands immediately next to an article by our own Prof. Francis A. March, entitled "*Die National-literatur der Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika in den Jahren 1860–*

61," and treating of Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*, Holmes's *Elsie Venner*, Theodore Winthrop's *Cecil Dreeme*, and George Wm. Curtis's *Trumps*), the first essay of Gaston Paris in the field of philology (though he had already tried his hand in another line, as we shall see later), was his *Etude sur le rôle de l'accent latin*. To this treatise of 132 pages Diez devotes in the *Jahrbuch* an eight-page review, in which he remarks :

"Herr Paris war, als er seine These unternahm, mit allem ausgerüstet, was zu ihrer Lösung erforderlich war. Ich bemerke nur, dass ihm auch Deutschlands grammatische Literatur sehr wohl bekannt ist. Dazu zeugt seine Arbeit von Beobachtungsgeist und unabhängigem Urtheil: jeder, der sich mit der französischen Grammatik in wissenschaftlicher Weise beschäftigt, sei er Schüler oder Meister, wird aus ihr lernen können. Sie macht der neuen Schule Ehre. . ."

And, in conclusion :

"Ich schliesse diese Anzeige mit dem Wunsche, Herr Paris möge fortfahren, die romanische Sprachwissenschaft mit seinen schätzbaren Beobachtungen zu bereichern."

In order to appreciate the sincerity of this wish, in view of the little recognition that the work of Diez himself had received at this time in France, we have only to quote a few lines again from the centenary address of Gaston Paris. They will serve also to illustrate the state of Romance scholarship in France at the date at which Gaston Paris began his own work there.

"Ses travaux [c'est-à-dire, les travaux de Diez] vraiment admirables de finesse et de pénétration sur la littérature provençale étaient en France comme non venus, et l'*Histoire littéraire* continuait, longtemps après qu'ils avaient paru, à publier sur les troubadours des notices où l'on n'en tenait aucun compte. Sa grammaire, hâtivement et maladroitement résumée, dans sa partie française, par Ampère, provoquait les sarcasmes de Génin, qui pensait écraser l'auteur sous le reproche d'avoir traité le français 'comme il eût fait le sanscrit

ou le persépolitain, et ne rencontrait que le scepticisme à l'Ecole des Chartes même, où Guessard se faisait fort d'opposer à chacune des règles de Diez autant d'exemples qu'il en avait donné pour l'appuyer."

In the *Jahrbuch* for 1865 is to be found, if I am not mistaken, the first adventure of Gaston Paris in the fascinating field of the original editing of mediaeval texts. His article is entitled *Fragment d'un petit poème dévot du Commencement du XII^e Siècle*. It is a critical edition in diminutive of what has since been more generally known by German scholars as *Die Paraphrase des Hohen Liedes*, and is the forerunner, in this direction, of a long line of texts critically constituted and annotated by Gaston Paris. But it was not until 1872 that the work appeared that was destined not only to set its author, at a single bound, in the front rank of philological scholars, but also to serve as a model to all subsequent investigators: *La Vie de Saint Alexis: poème du XI^e siècle*. In this extensive work the editor applies for the first time rigorously and on a large scale those thorough-going principles of manuscript classification, restitution of readings and forms, and historical and critical investigation, which constitute the foundations of all philological scholarship, whether applied to fields ancient or modern. In regard to the spirit in which the work was carried on, the author himself remarks in his preface:

"Je serais heureux qu'il [ce volume] obtînt l'approbation du monde savant s'il pouvait ainsi contribuer à faire apprécier favorablement et par conséquent à affermir notre jeune Ecole des Hautes Etudes. C'est par elle que s'est introduit chez nous l'usage de ces *conférences pratiques*, si nécessaires à côté des *cours* proprement dits, qui peuvent seules propager efficacement les méthodes et créer ce qui nous manque le plus, une tradition scientifique."¹

¹ Perhaps almost the only criticism of a general nature that could be applied to this work is its failure in some cases to grasp the bearing of certain principles not at that time fully understood, such as the nature of *accent doublets* (*car, quer*) and the influence of analogy in such words as *amour, époux*.

As early as 1870 Paris had published, in the *Jahrbuch*, his first contribution to the lexicology of the Old French language, under the modest title of *Contributions aux Glanures lexicographiques de M. Schéler*. With this little article began a series of elucidations of the difficulties and obscurities of the Old French vocabulary and phraseology that may be aptly characterized by calling attention to the fact that one of the difficult phrases unsuccessfully grappled with in the *Jahrbuch* at this early date by Schéler, Paul Meyer and himself, and later by several other scholars, was fully explained by him in a similar article twenty-two years afterwards. (*Boute-en-courroie*. Cf. *Jahrbuch*, XI, 148, and *Rom.*, XXI, 407.)

We have now reached the date of the founding by Paul Meyer and Gaston Paris of the quarterly journal *Romania*. Its first article is by M. Paris, entitled *Romani, Romania, Lingua romana, Romancium*; and its opening words are as follows:

“Le nom de langues romanes, actuellement reçu dans la science, rend sensible à tous le lien qui réunit les idiomes auxquels on l’applique et l’origine de leur communauté. Ce nom ne leur est attribué que depuis assez peu de temps; le mot *roman* lui-même, avant d’être réservé à l’usage auquel nous l’appliquons, a reçu souvent des significations plus ou moins spéciales. L’objet des pages qui suivent est d’étudier l’histoire, le sens primitif, les applications successives et les formes diverses du mot *roman* et de ceux qui s’y rattachent, et de justifier ainsi le titre que nous avons donné à ce recueil.”

Of the journal thus auspiciously launched it has been estimated that over a fourth part, from that day to this, has been contributed by the joint founders, while of this fourth, it is probable that something more than half is the share of M. Paris, about equally divided between constructive philology and literary history, on the one hand; and criticism in these two fields, on the other. How characterize such a wealth of productiveness? For the philological side, let it suffice to

hint at critical editions of the *Vie de Saint Léger* and the *Passion du Christ*, of *Mainet*, of *Lais inédits*, of *Jean Renaud*, of *Martin le Franc*, of the *Lai de la Rose*. As a model of phonological research, we have his *Phonétique française: o fermé*. In the domain of historical grammar, under the title *Le Pronom neutre de la 3^e personne en français*, the author writes (as I have recently had occasion to say in the *American Journal of Philology*) "on an obscure and almost unknown Old-French monosyllable, a richly annotated article of sixteen pages, which for graceful directness of treatment, charm of style and intrinsic interest, not to speak of sound and penetrating scholarship, is notably worthy of the member of the French Academy which Gaston Paris has since become." In addition to these and other philological productions, there still deserve to be mentioned his *Extraits de la Chanson de Roland* and *Extraits de Joinville* critically prepared for elementary use.

II. LITERARY HISTORY.

With such a training and such a predilection for minute and painstaking philological research, it might perhaps be occasion for surprise that a similarly strong bent for studies in literary history, such as was displayed in so remarkable a manner in the *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne*, should not have been stifled or neglected. It seems, however, on the contrary, that the splendid philological equipment of our author has only been a stimulus to him to bring to bear his linguistic insight and attainments upon the solution of the many existing problems in literary history. In the first volume of the *Romania* he writes, "*Sur un vers du Coronement Loois*," a full-length treatise on the relations to each other of the various elements that go to make up the northern and the southern "Guillaume" cycles. Next, it is the *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy* that engages his facile pen, and the history of whose origin and development he traces with masterly hand. As a

specimen of the style of treatment let us follow for a few lines—taken at haphazard—the course of our author's study:

“Avant d'examiner les sources et le fondement historique de ce roman, signalons quelques passages intéressants pour l'histoire des mœurs et des usages, que nous n'avons pas relevés dans l'analyse précédente.

“Bien que le héros du roman soit appelé *châtelain*, c'est-à-dire gouverneur, de Couci, il ne paraît pas habiter ce château. Son *manoir* est à trois lieux de Chauvigni. . . . Il séjourne en outre fréquemment à Saint-Quentin, mais il n'y a qu'un *hostel*, c'est-à-dire qu'il est reçu habituellement chez un bourgeois. Cette distinction entre le manoir ou domicile réel, qui est aux champs, et l'*hostel* en ville, est à signaler: elle marque la transition entre le moyen âge où les seigneurs n'habitaient que leurs châteaux, et l'époque plus moderne où ils passent au moins une grande partie de l'année dans les villes; les *hôtels* des familles nobles étaient sans doute à l'origine, comme celui du châtelain [de Couci] les maisons bourgeoises où ils descendaient d'habitude.”

Most extensive of the studies that Gaston Paris has devoted to French literary history are, on the one hand, the series of papers on the Old French Epic, such as his *Chanson du Pèlerinage Charlemagne*, his *Episode d'Aimeri de Narbonne*, his *Le Carmen de Prodicione Guenonis et la Légende de Roncevaux*, and *La Date et la Patrie de la Chanson de Roland*; and on the other hand, his *Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde: Lancelot du Lac; Le Conte de la Charrette; Guinglain, ou le Bel Inconnu; Tristan, etc.* Of these collective studies it can only be said that they surpass in interest and importance anything that has been done on the same subjects by other scholars; while the titles mentioned represent only a fragmentary portion of the author's contributions to literary history.

III. CRITICISM.

Passing from the theme of constructive scholarship to that of learned criticism, one who is acquainted with the output of

Gaston Paris in both fields would perhaps find it difficult to decide, so eminently does he excel in each direction, in which of the two domains his more important labor lies.

On entering, in 1893, upon the third decade of their joint labors as editors of the *Romania*, MM. Paul Meyer and Gaston Paris, in an article placed at the head of the journal, take a comprehensive survey of the situation of Romance scholarship, and this is the manner in which they express themselves in regard to scientific criticism :

“A côté des recherches originales, nous devons réserver une place suffisante à l'examen des travaux d'autrui. Nous le disions dans notre programme de 1871 : ‘La critique des ouvrages qui paraîtront dans le domaine de nos études sera une partie importante du recueil.’ Et cette partie devient de plus en plus considérable, à mesure que la philologie romane va se développant en tous les sens. Nous sommes inondés de livres, de périodiques, de dissertations pour le doctorat allemand (dont beaucoup pourraient sans dommage être présentées en manuscrit), de contributions à telle étude, de suppléments à tels recherches. C'est une marée montante qui menace de restreindre la part consacrée aux études originales. On voudra bien nous excuser si trop souvent de bons livres n'ont pas le compte rendu qu'ils méritent, et si l'analyse de tel ou tel périodique est en retard. C'est que ce genre de travail ne peut être confié au premier venu. La critique exige une expérience et, s'il est permis de le dire, un tour de main, qui ne sont pas communs. Et puis les jeunes érudits de notre temps ne semblent pas avoir pour cet exercice salutaire le goût que nous manifestions, lorsqu'en 1865 nous fondions la *Revue critique*.”

Only those who have been accustomed year after year to read and digest Gaston Paris's fifteen or twenty page reviews in solid minion type can fully appreciate all that is signified by such a statement. The patient care, ungrudging faithfulness and brilliant critical ability displayed by Gaston Paris in each succeeding number of the *Romania* is something to stir the ambition and kindle the zeal of younger scholars everywhere. Nor is it in the *Romania* alone, but notably also in

the *Journal des Savants*, not to mention the critical journals of less importance, that this devotion to what might in other cases be regarded as a minor form of scholarship, is exhibited.

IV. EDUCATION.

Entering upon the work of higher education in France at a period when, as we have seen, the methods of scholarship especially in his chosen field were far from being abreast of the times, the example, the labors and the ideals of Gaston Paris have exerted an untold influence on the educational rejuvenation of his much loved country. Yet, strange as it may appear, what he has accomplished for the advancement of education in his own land is scarcely more than what the force of his personality, exercised through devoted pupils of his drawn from all the quarters of Europe and America, has been able to effect throughout the learned world outside of France. One of the external evidences of this fact is the great number of books and learned dissertations that have been dedicated to him by scholars in all countries, while two extensive memorial volumes, one in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary (in 1889) of his birth, and the other of the twenty-fifth anniversary (in 1890) of his doctorate—each composed of scientific papers contributed by former pupils of his—attest the love and veneration felt for him by all who have been accorded the privilege of his friendship. In his public acknowledgment of the latter of these volumes (comprising the contributions of no less than forty-five of his earlier pupils) M. Paris expresses himself in words that throw a flood of light upon the noble aspirations of his life :

Je me rappelle qu'il y a vingt-cinq ans, dans la première leçon que je fis, aux cours libres de la rue Gerson fondés par M. Duruy, je disais que le vœu de tout professeur digne de ce nom pour chacun de ses élèves est le vœu d'Hector pour son fils :

Καί ποτέ τις εἴπῃσι· Πατὴρ δ' ὄγε πολλὸν ἀμείνων

Ce vœu s'est réalisé pour plus d'un de ceux qui, venus de France ou de l'étranger, ont depuis lors trouvé dans mes cours et mes conférences leur première initiation à la science. En voyant la façon dont ils ont su développer et accroître le germe qui leur avait été confié, je me dis que ma carrière didactique n'a pas été inutile et cela ne me fait pas seulement plaisir, cela me prouve que j'ai eu raison (contre l'avis de quelques conseillers bien intentionnés), de donner inflexiblement à mon enseignement la direction toute scientifique que je lui ai donnée, le tenant également à l'écart de toute préparation à un examen quelconque et de tout appel à l'intérêt d'un public étranger au travail : cela m'a valu quelques heures difficiles, où j'ai pu craindre de me trouver isolé, et, par suite, d'avoir choisi une mauvaise voie ; mais je suis aujourd'hui délivré de mes doutes et largement payé de mes peines."

Many are the learned productions and many are the personal qualities—both private and public—that I have failed to mention in this brief survey,¹ but there remains one utterance of the distinguished savant, that may fitly serve as a closing paragraph in any attempt to do honor to his name : In a memorable lecture delivered on the 8th of December, 1870, at the Collège de France, Gaston Paris thus declares his profession of intellectual faith :

Je professe absolument et sans réserve cette doctrine, que la science n'a d'autre objet que la vérité, et la vérité pour elle-même, sans aucun souci des conséquences bonnes ou mauvaises, regrettables ou heureuses, que cette vérité pourrait avoir dans la pratique. Celui qui, par un motif patriotique, religieux et même moral, se permet dans les faits qu'il étudie, dans les conclusions qu'il tire, la plus petite dissimulation, l'altération la plus légère, n'est pas digne d'avoir sa place dans le grand laboratoire où la probité est un titre d'admission plus indispensable que l'habileté. Ainsi comprises, les études communes, poursuivies avec le même esprit dans tous

¹ Especially to be cited for the convenience of scholars who have yet to become acquainted with the work of Gaston Paris, are his *Littérature française au moyen âge*, 1 vol. in-16, and his *Poésie au moyen âge*, leçons et lectures, 2 vol. in-16.

les pays civilisés, forment au-dessus des nationalités restreintes, diverses et trop souvent hostiles, une grande patrie qu'aucune guerre ne souille, qu'aucun conquérant ne menace, et où les âmes trouvent le refuge et l'unité que la cité de Dieu leur a donnés en d'autres temps.

H. A. TODD.